

Report

Report to:	Social Work Resources Committee
Date of Meeting:	15 November 2006
Report by:	Executive Director (Social Work Resources) Executive Director (Corporate Resources)

Subject:	Fostering and Adoption Services - Review of Establishment
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ◆ Amend the staffing complement to support the increase in volume and range of services which the Council has a duty to provide for vulnerable children and young people.

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Committee is asked to approve the following recommendation(s):-

- (1) that a post of Senior Social Worker graded SCP 75-80 (£31,151 - £33,542) and a post of Social Worker graded SCP 55-74 (£23,103 - £30,695) be established.

3. Background

- 3.1. South Lanarkshire Council Social Work Resources has been working closely with colleagues across the Council and external agencies to improve the quality of life and outcomes for children.
- 3.2. Directly provided foster care is by far the best value for children, both in terms of human and financial costs. A residential child care home has a unit cost of £1,270 per week, residential school £3,000 per week and Secure care costs £4,000 per week.
- 3.3. The Payments for Skills scheme is based on both the age of the child and the skills level of the foster carers. The current foster payment rate ranges from £214.87 to £358.11 per week for each child, which offers some element of reward for the skills and experience that carers bring to the task. This has had a significant impact on both the retention of current carers and the recruitment of additional carers.
- 3.4. At the point of approving the increase in payments to foster carers in June 2005, there were 32 carers providing placements for 80 children, with 13 children placed with external providers.

4. Current Position

- 4.1. Currently there are 43 carers caring for 93 children, with the loss of only 2 carers since June 2005, both due to safe care issues. The net increase in foster carers is 34% and the increase in numbers of children in foster care is 11.6%. This is due to an increase in referrals, particularly where there is substance misuse and/or mental health issues for the parents. Some of the existing carers were over numbers in terms of registration, therefore some of the additional foster carer resources have been used to resolve this issue.
- 4.2. The number of children in external foster care placements has been reduced from 13 to 10, with plans to maintain this number and reduce it at a time which best suits the care planning and planned outcomes for individual children.
- 4.3. By placing recruitment ads in the Job Vacancy columns and highlighting the payment scheme, there has been a significant increase in enquiries and there is now a focus on increasing the number of foster carers who can look after older children with high support needs, some of whom may need to be looked after on their own. There is now an average of 4.5 enquiries per week through the Council's website. 10% of new enquiries are reaching approval, which is in line with the national average.
- 4.4. Adoption and Fostering Services are now subject to an annual inspection which involves the assessment of the Fostering and Adoption Services against the regulations set out under the Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001 and against a set of National Standards. In order to meet and maintain these standards, both services require to be continuously quality assured, which includes intensive joint working with fieldwork peers in basic grade and management level.

5. Employee Implications

- 5.1. In order to fulfil the duties and responsibilities of providing fostering, adoption and birth origins counselling resources which meet National Standards and provide short and long term security for vulnerable children and young people, a Senior Social Worker and 1 additional Social Worker are required.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1. The following shows the current and future financial costs:

Post	Number	SCP	Rate per hour	Annual salary	Gross costs	Total cost
Social Worker	1	55-74	£12.66 - £16.82	£23,103 – £30,695	£36,066	£34,066
Senior Social Worker	1	75-80	£17.07 – £18.38	£31,151 – £33,542	£41,225	£41,225
Total Cost						£77,291

- 6.2. The continued growth and development of the fostering and adoption services will be complemented by a reduction in the use of independent agencies and placements within residential child care homes, both of which bear a higher cost as detailed above.
- 6.3. Further funding is available 2006/07 - £0.175m, and 2007/08 - £0.088m from the Scottish Executive to improve fostering services. This will fund the posts of Senior Social Worker and Social Worker.

- 6.4. The Scottish Executive is planning to launch a National Strategy to improve fostering services, with the funding as above being the beginning of a process and drive for change. The Payments for Skills Scheme and the planned growth and development of South Lanarkshire Council's fostering and adoption services will result in better outcomes for children and young people who will be looked after within their communities. It will also mean that this Council will be well placed in terms of meeting needs and high standards.

7. Other Implications

- 7.1. None

8. Consultation

- 8.1. Regular consultation with staff and foster carers takes place regarding the further improvement and development of services for looked after children.

Harry Stevenson

Executive Director (Social Work Resources)

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Executive Director (Corporate Resources)

19 September 2006

Link(s) to Council Objectives

- Living in the community
- Supporting our communities
- Modernising services and resource management

Previous References

- Report to Social Work Resources Committee – Review of South Lanarkshire Council Foster Carer Scheme (1 June 2005)

List of Background Papers

None

Contact for Further Information

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:-

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